

July 24, 2013

The National Security Working Group (NSWG) provides wide-spectrum coverage of issues like the Iranian threat, missile defense, sequestration, New START, events in Syria and more. We look forward to providing this newsletter to RSC members and welcome your input throughout the 113th Congress.

Afghanistan needs continued support to sustain gains made against terrorists (Rep. Franks)

Coalition talks with Hamid Karzai regarding a post-2014 Afghanistan are stuck somewhere between having a signed, Bilateral Security Agreement and rumors of a "zero option;" meaning there might be a point where the Afghan government refuses any U.S. support and the Afghan National Security Forces would be left to defend the country on their own.

Let us be clear; a zero option is **not** an option in Afghanistan. This region is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda, and partnering with a cooperative Afghan government is the best way to solidifying gains made against terrorist organizations in this area.

The U.S. currently has about 66,000 troops in Afghanistan and that number was expected to go down to about 34,000 by the end of 2013. President Obama has committed to having all U.S. and coalition combat forces out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

The U.S. and its allies have been negotiating with the Afghans, and among themselves, for months on the size of a training and advisory force that would be left behind after 2014. When General Dempsey traveled to Afghanistan this week, he said he was against the zero option, but allowed that it was a possibility if the Afghans remained obstinate about things such as an exit tax on U.S. property leaving the country.

Both General Dempsey and our executive leadership should continue the discussions with the Afghan government to solidify a bilateral security agreement that will allow for future training opportunities for our talented military



General Dempsey spoke with Afghan President Hamid Karzai this week in further attempts to solidify a Bilateral Security Agreement.

members to enable well-intentioned Afghan Soldiers to continue the fight against violent extremists. There is a fine line of balance with any conflict about how much blood and treasure we should invest in a region and a people to fight against a known enemy; we do have the right to discuss and impose our needs in that supportive relationship. We cannot and should not risk the lives of our military men and women who will be supporting ongoing training and advisory missions without establishing practical and secure operating conditions, signing a functional Bilateral Security Agreement with the Afghan government, and then strictly enforcing these accords.

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The failed strategy in Syria (Rep. Fleming)

In his famous Farewell Address, President George Washington wisely warned against the United States becoming involved in excessive foreign entanglements. Unfortunately, President Obama has failed to heed that advice and instead has decided, with the green light from the House Intelligence Committee, to move forward in arming the Syrian opposition with small arms, ammunition, and anti-tank weaponry. It is far too simplistic to say that the United States is ensnaring itself in the Syrian civil war, as dangerous as that is. The President is also engaging in a proxy war with Hezbollah and Iran using a Syrian opposition force that is itself losing a battle for control between moderates on one side and Salafists (Muslim Brotherhood on steroids) and al-Qaeda factions on the other. Foreign entanglements indeed!

With the deaths of over 100,000 people, the internal displacement of 4 million, and the displacement abroad of 1.5 million, the Syrian civil war is indeed a humanitarian crisis. However, the President's decision to assist the rebel forces flies in the face of U.S. human

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rights rhetoric of promoting religious freedom and democracy. While the euphemistic “Free Syria Army” may appeal to American sentiments of democracy and pluralism, the Administration has failed to grasp that the Islamist opposition in Syria may be even worse than the recently deposed Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which, while in power, sentenced 43 staff members of pro-democracy non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including 16 Americans, to five year prison terms and removed religious freedoms and protections for religious minorities such as Coptic Christians.

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Each NSWG Item reflects the position and view of the authoring office. Questions or comments regarding the NSWG can be directed to: Joe Murray, Joe.Murray@mail.house.gov or 6-0678